



July 2026

Editor: Kevan Nason, N4XL

Thank you to our group leadership:

President – Ed, K3DNE

Vice President - Dave, WN4AFP

Treasurer – Scott, KG9V

Secretary – Dennis, K2SX

Web Master – Frank, KG4IGC

SFCG Webpage: swampfoxcontestgroup.com

The July SFCG Picnic at NJ4F is canceled

Dave NJ4F wrote, “I am going to cancel the get together I was planning. Apparently, the summer is not a good time to plan this sort of thing. Not enough members committed to make it worthwhile. Will try again at another time.”

Contest Tips

- From *Tips For Working Weak Ones Especially on the low bands How to Succeed – Revisited* by Jack WOUCE
 - Since you can't increase a weak signal without increasing noise... Reduce the noise!
 - Understand your receiver. Get the most it has to offer from filters, noise blanker, RF & AF Gain Controls and DSP
 - Practice, practice, practice to gain experience before the next contest or DXpedition. Listen, Listen, Listen
 - Expand station capability by adding low noise RX antennas such as Beverages, BOGS, Snakes, Ewes, Pennants, Flags, Coaxial and K9AY Loops

- The 3 P's
 - Propagation – Know when the DX signal may peak and watch azimuth changes
 - Patience – Propagation may move toward you. Don't call if you can't hear him.
 - Persistence – Keep trying, in a contest go back for them
- Tips from Other Members (Supplement to the above presentation)
 - N4YDU – Understand propagation and don't spend too much time on one single multiplier. Tune high in the band away from QRM and be persistent.
 - K2AV – Listen with narrow bandwidth. In a pile up send your call a bit high or lower than the masses calling a multiplier. *(Editor's note: Remember narrow bandwidths reduce noise in the passband.)*
 - WA2JFK – Use the biggest and best antennas you can afford, size matters. Staying power means more multipliers, taking more breaks means less multipliers. Run when you find a clear frequency and log correctly. *(Editor's note: "Size matters"... An example is a 3 ele yagi on a 12 foot boom will have less gain than 3 ele on 18 ft, and the 18 ft one has less gain than a 24 foot boom.)*
 - K3KO – No Doze helps.
 - K4CZ – Listen very closely between strong signals. *(Editor's note: This is where a radio with high RMDR shows its worth.)*
 - K4QPL – Put up the best antennas you can and learn to set up speech processor.
- Nutrition. From the old Contesting WIKI. I don't think it is on the web anymore.
 - Garbage in, Garbage out, as the saying goes...

Contesting is a demanding sport. A good portion of contesting is brain-work, and some is physical work. Both require good nutrition to work optimally. Most will agree that starting a contest off with a bag of potato chips and a beer, while it might be satisfying, may not allow one to be at his or her optimal performance level.
 - So, what are some of the important things to remember?
 - Drink lots of good water
 - Keep processed food to a minimum - our bodies have been designed to eat whole foods.
 - Keep sugars to a minimum - check the label - A can of Coke has ~39 grams of sugar!
 - Eat many small meals, not a big breakfast, lunch and dinner
 - Try to avoid the roller coaster of getting tired and waking up with sugar and/or caffeine

It's also a good idea to hydrate before a contest begins. Start at least a day ahead of time, especially for an SSB contest.

From the Reflector:

- Stuart NV4T and his XYL N4TAX enjoy traveling. They were in southwestern Ohio camping the weekend of the WVQP. Stuart drove over to West Virginia to make a few Q's. I envy our group members who combine travel and operating like Stuart does.

- Ed K3DNE found the Swamp Fox Restaurant & Bar on his travels and wondered if he could get a discount because he is the SFCG President. Didn't ask, but I was wondering if he wanted a discount at the restaurant or bar.
- You just have to think there is something to it when top club scorer Dave WN4AFP posts, "THIS IS AN AWESOME CW/SSB CONTESTING ONLINE TRAINER". He told us about a great contest trainer called *Callsign Training Platform* at <https://cw4ever.eu/trainer/>. This IS a great program. It gives you SSB, CW and Call Typing practice. Everyone who wants to improve their speed in any of those areas, especially Runners who need to quickly translate what they hear to a log entry, should create an easy to get to link for this web page. You wouldn't think John W4IX, one of our top scorers, would need such a thing but he answered, "Thanks Dave. I am going to use it from now until the IARU test." I just looked at the website and agree with both John and Dave. It's a great trainer and I now have a shortcut to it.
- Mark KD4D passed along an opportunity from Juan AC6ZM to join the N4W team in a distributed team effort for the upcoming World Wide Award in the July 2026 Sprint. Details are in SFCG post #33103 and at <https://hamaward.cloud/www/rules>, but here are some key points:
 - Location: You must be physically operating from within the 4th callsign district (your transmitter/receiver must be located here). Your personal callsign prefix does not matter, as long as the station is in the 4th callsign district.
 - Station Setup: You must have the equipment to operate independently and a reliable internet connection for real-time logging/coordination.
 - Operating Skill: You should be comfortable holding and running a frequency to handle pile-ups efficiently.
 - Bands and Modes Available:
This event offers maximum flexibility to match your station's strengths and your personal operating preferences. All modes are fully available for use—whether you prefer CW, Phone/SSB, or Digital (such as RTTY, FT8, FT4, or PSK, etc.). We will have access to all standard bands, including the WARC bands, giving us plenty of spectrum to find clear frequencies and maximize our rate throughout the sprint.
- As I review posts from the last month I noticed two things. It's heartening to see how many people are actively contesting and all the varied contests they are entering. As some of the original SFCG Founding Fathers have noted, the SFCG has come along way since its inception. Keep it up!
- If you're a 6 meter enthusiast then keep an eye on SFCG posts. Notices of openings frequently appear.
- I'm not the only one having trouble keeping my BIC due to physical pain. Herschel KA2G fought a bout of sciatica. Contesting is supposed to be fun. Bob W1RPG commiserated saying he's had issues with the same. Take care of yourself physically and contest when you can rather than forcing yourself.
- There were some great scores in the IARU. Top claimed scores were Dave WN4AFP piloted the Ft. Mill contest station to an amazing #3 US with his 1,285,228 and John W4IX posted his 1,005,992 points. Jim N2ZZ, Kevan N4XL, Ron WB3X, Bill N4IQ, Ted K7OM, and others joined in the fun too.

Bonding Every Piece of Equipment — How Critical Is It?

By Kevan N4XL

Virtually every Ham knows you need to ground your equipment, but not everyone knows the difference between grounding and bonding. Ward Silver N0AX is well known for his work publishing information on the two, but I believe he collaborated with Jim Brown K9YC who's information on the subject I had read long before hearing of Ward's publications. Jim writes, 'Grounding Is An Earth Connection –Lightning and Power Safety. Bonding is connecting everything together in a controlled manner –Lightning and Power Safety –Minimizes Hum, Buzz, RFI. Both must be done right to have a safe and problem-free system.'

I made a deep dive into Jim's information when designing my station and found some information that traditionalists find difficult to accept. In addition to connecting each piece of equipment to a common ground point (without daisy chaining) he advocates connecting each piece of equipment that passes signals to each other be connected to each other's casing at the point of entry of whatever cable connects the two. This is to avoid the "Pin 1" problem. If you don't know what that is, you should. It has helped many Hams solve their RFI problems. The problem is well known in the commercial audio field and Jim has written extensively about it for both the commercial and amateur radio communities. One explanation can be found on page 6 of Jim's publication *Build Contesting Scores by Killing Receive Noise* which can be found at <http://audiosystemsgroup.com/KillingReceiveNoise.pdf> and beginning on page 30 of the PDF *Power, Grounding, Bonding, and Audio for Ham Radio Safety, Hum Buzz and RFI* found at <http://k9yc.com/GroundingAndAudio.pdf>. The latter includes a more detailed and visual explanation.

Last I read Ward's material he doesn't go as far as Jim and recommend equipment to equipment bonding, but connecting equipment to an earth ground is imperative. It's subjective, but I elected to follow Jim's way of bonding equipment in my shack and did not have any RFI problems. I'm convinced his system is effective since over time I have removed and reinstalled equipment and broken his bonding scheme of connecting all equipment directly together. Although I maintained a connection to a common ground point when I reinstalled things I still developed minor RFI problems. Investigating I found I had failed to reconnect the bonding wires going directly between pieces of equipment. Reconnecting them much of my RFI disappeared. What little remained was from direct induction because my computer monitor was too close to the radio (mostly cured by moving the monitor further away from the radio), using unshielded cabling (cured by replacing or rerouting cabling), and switch mode power supply birdies. Those experiences convinced me Jim's ideas have merit.

Temple WT4DX asked this question of CWops reflector members, "I'm reorganizing my radio room and wondering how critical it is to bond EVERY piece of equipment together. Looking for real-world experience." I'm not sure all responder's new what Jim's definition of bonding is, but I'm sure they at least meant

Paul K2DB

It's as critical as having your heart beating.

Stan N8HN

I agree!

Alan AD6E

No, it isn't absolutely necessary in all situations. However, according to Murphy Corollary #42, If you don't do it you'll wish you had.

Fred K6DGW

"Necessary" and "Desirable" aren't the same ... until the thunderstorm arrives.

W9YA

For the full and correct story: PolyPhaser Book is THE go-to source for information.

https://books.google.com/books/about/The_grounds_for_Lightning_and_EMP_Protec.html?id=r349AAAACAAJ

It is the seminal book for this stuff.....

Tim K3LR

Correctly bonding all of your equipment in your ham station and proper grounding can save tons of headaches and problems.

Look at Ward's video below – read his book. Bonding really matters.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ctkfddt-H4g>

And Ward NOAX himself chimed in with:

> As I understand it, the bonding of your equipment _in_ the shack is for RF, not lightning protection. His book and presentation have an entire section dedicated to lightning protection.

Thanks for the endorsement, Sean (and others). Bonding in the station primarily serves to help manage the RF present from the strong local transmitted signal. It is also important for lightning protection (which is a sort of low-frequency RF) because it minimizes voltage differences from a lightning transient or surge. Even with external protectors and single-point ground panel for feed and control line entry, the magnetic field from a nearby strike can still induce significant voltages inside on all the wiring. So bonding is important for that, too. It's much less important for ac safety if all powered equipment is properly grounded but it doesn't hurt!

The Polyphaser book referenced by W9YA is certainly good, even long after its original publication. Ron Block NR2B, one of the Polyphaser folks, has just released a new book, "Lightning Protection For the Amateur Radio Community" (<https://www.wrblock.com/>) with updated information. Ron was a reviewer for the G&B book and made many contributions. He also won a QST Cover Plaque for a recent article about designing and installing a lightning protection system at a club station. Good stuff and highly recommended.

A note on the bonding bus - I've started using the ground bars for ac service panels in place of the ubiquitous copper pipe. They are inexpensive and designed for clamping wires. I mount the ground bar directly to the metal sheet (aluminum roofing flashing works great at low cost) using sheet metal screws and toothed lockwashers to keep the connection solid over time.

Good luck during thunderstorm season! (Which lasts all year in Florida...)

Are you a CW op and wondered if upgrading your rig is worth it?

By Kevan N4XL

It was for me.

RMDR isn't everything in a rig. Meaning the radio at the top of Rob Sherwood's list isn't necessarily equivalent to the Holy Grail for receiver performance. For example, Icom's are the preferred radio for many Contesters and DXer's but other than the IC-7851, the next Icom transceivers on the list is the IC-7760 and IC-7610 coming in at 22nd and 23rd. I've always been intrigued by the transceiver Noise Power Ratio (NPR) test results from Adam Farson VA7OJ/AB4OJ. His tests use a different methodology than Sherwood and it turns out Icoms do very well in regard to NPR. I believe Alan is now a SK, but when he published those results Icoms did better on NPR than most of the rigs at the top of Sherwood's list from that time. Maybe that's why Icoms are so popular amongst discerning operators. Regardless, Sherwood's list is the popular favorite and some Ham's won't buy a rig unless it is near the top of that testing methodology. (I've never understood why so many SSB operators only want those at the top of his list saying how much better their top RMDR rated radio is than others since the RMDR ratings are only for CW, but they do. Sherwood himself has said most hams wouldn't notice much difference in the top radios and anything over 80 dB is satisfactory for SSB DXing and contesting.)

Being a 100 watt station I prefer CW. I've used a FTdx101 and K4 at W7WZ's station and a K3 at NQ4I. I have heard how those high RMDR rated rigs do a fine job pulling weak ones out from adjacent strong CW signals. They a better job than my long in the tooth TS590's with 92 dB RMDR and 31st placement on Sherwood's list. Realizing the top rigs hear better on CW I have long wanted something with an RMDR above 100 dB.

Since I have never been very good at SO2R and hardly used it in the last couple years I sold that gear off and bought a used FTdx101D. It's Sherwood measured RMDR is 110. An 18 dB improvement over the TS590. That's a significant improvement. Haven't used it much yet but when I did get on during a couple contests, I sought out weak ones adjacent to strong signals on CW. Is the 101 much better than a 590? In my opinion – for competitive contesters on CW it is a resounding yes. I feel there is an improvement on SSB too, but I haven't spent much time with that mode and the improvement isn't so glaringly obvious.

I am looking forward to spending long hours BIC while learning and enjoying my new rig. If you are in the market for a new radio I recommend looking for something ergonomically friendly, with the features you like, and an RMDR above 100 dB.

Observations by the Editor:

- FT8. Wolfgang OE1MWW wrote, "... did you know: In FT8, a WAV file is created on the end of every receive cycle for decoding. Third-party antivirus software typically scans that file before releasing it, introducing unnecessary latency into a time-critical process." I wondered about the truth of that and with what software such files were being created. Google AI says, "By standard operation in software like WSJT-X, audio is only saved for the current 15-second receive interval, processed for decoding, and then immediately deleted or

overwritten if not specifically told to save them.” Since at least two cycles of save and delete/overwrite are involved concerns of possible latency interruptions in FT8 are valid, especially when the computer is pushing its capabilities, anti-virus programs are involved, and/or the computer is not using solid state drives.

- Ever wonder how to clean up heavily tarnished blackened brass pieces like screws and plates? David G3UNA said, “I found a few minutes in tomato ketchup worked wonders on some small brass objects.” Eric M0HFF suggested Brasso on a Q-tip and a little patience. Alan G0TLK added, “I was going to suggest white vinegar with a dash of table salt, but ketchup has both of those!” Ketchup it is for my next cleaning project. Wish I’d have known about that while still in the Navy. Likewise glad those sadistic SOB’s above us recruits didn’t think about making us use Q-tips.
- While following a thread about using a PC microphone with two rigs in SO2R I ran across this from John K3CT. It doesn’t apply to every radio, but might help you sometime troubleshoot a problem. Note the information about how turning the power supply off affects some radios too.

You have to be really careful with the IC-7600. When the radio is powered off, the virtual COM ports and internal radio soundcard is removed from the Windows hardware table. If you start N1MM Logger with the IC-7600 powered off, the radio control COM port and soundcard will not exist. At program start, the audio endpoints are located using the prior stored soundcard text string. This eliminates the issues caused by Windows changing the audio device numbers. If the prior (stored) soundcard text does not exist at program start, the code changes the soundcard to “Default” to use audio device 0. This is necessary to prevent RTEs if you try to play a wav file with a missing soundcard.

Icom powers the IC-7610 USB IC in the radio even when the transceiver turned off to prevent the disappearing virtual com port and audio device. I believe the IC-7300 was the first Icom radio to do this. This means that what I described above will occur if you turn off the power supply for the IC-7610 and start N1MM Logger.

N1MM+ Tips:

NOTE: Unless otherwise specified references to problems people are having, solutions, and tips come from the N1MMLoggerPlus Group.io reflector. A search there for items described should turn up the original posts and replies.

Selected changes made since last newsletter. (NOTE: These often come from a user requesting a change or fix to a problem.)

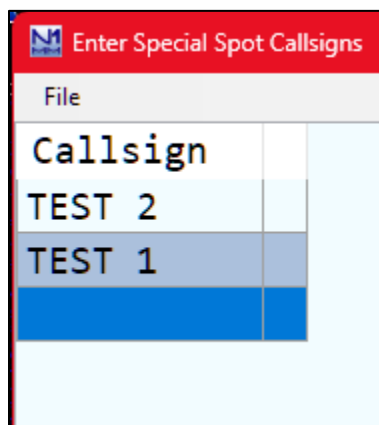
1. Statistics: Buttons were hidden (N3RD) (Coded by N1MM)) (Coded by K3CT)
2. Fix for user drawn windows when changing ops (Coded by K3CT, N1MM)
3. Improved custom message box behavior. Put it in lower right corner of relevant window (Coded by N1MM)
4. Improved Full installer detection & reaction to cloud folders (Coded by N1MM)
5. Add "New Default Skin (Dark)" as Manage skins option (Coded by N1MM) Added New Default.skin to full installer and update installer scripts (Coded by N1MM)

- Want a way to sort the AMQ window by special call signs for things like QP's or the WRTC? This tip started from N1MM post #101407. The Telnet window has a tab called "Special Calls". From there you can Edit, Import or Export them, and it allows for Automatically including QSO Party bonus station calls. This can also be used for special event stations and I imagine also in the General Log for DXpeditions. I haven't used it yet, but plan to. There isn't much information about this feature, none in the latest manual, so you'll need to play around with it and test it before the actual contest.

John K3CT wrote about release note text that says, "Special Calls: Changed special call processing to ignore /xxx suffixes in comparisons and during file import.", and "Special Calls: Changed special call processing to ignore /xxx suffixes in comparisons and during file import."



I clicked the "Edit, Import or Export" button and this comes up (I put the TEST calls in):

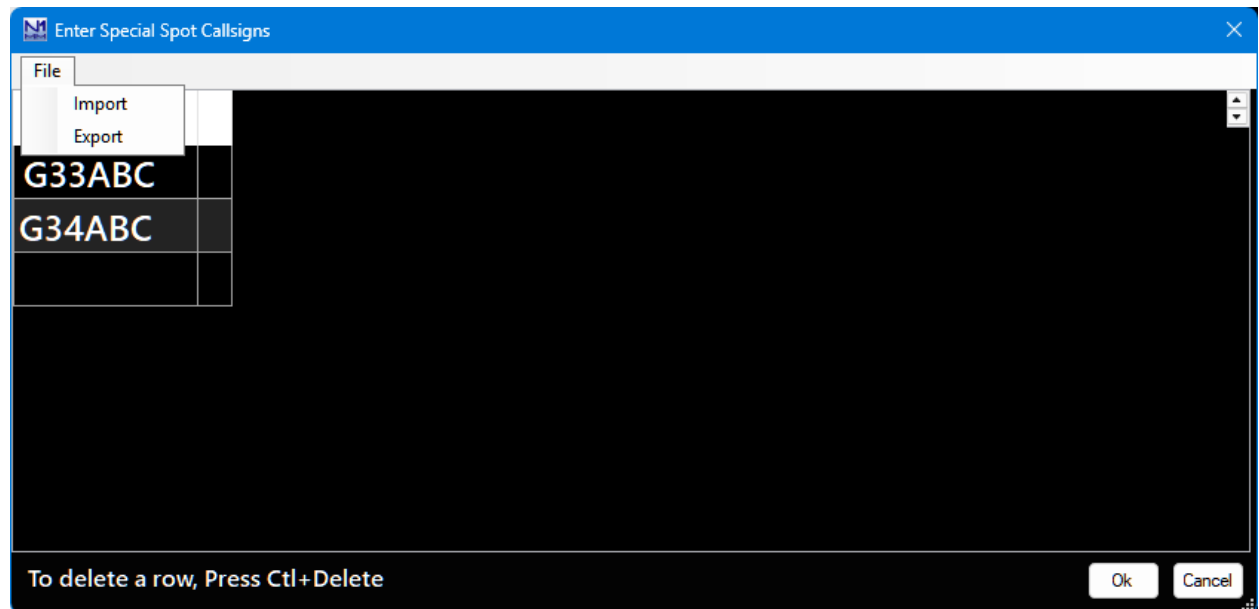


It looks to me like you just type in the desired calls in the first column and leave the second column blank. Then every call in this list puts a "heart" symbol on the AMQ window for that spot. You can sort by that heart field so spotted and active Special Calls can be quickly found. Underneath the word "File" are choices to Import or Export. If you don't have a file to import, you'll have to type the Special Calls in yourself. But there shouldn't be too many or they wouldn't be Special.

Tom N1MM wrote this about the upcoming WRTC test:

When SOMEONE creates a list of the WRTC callsigns (not operators), put that list in the ExportFiles directory under your N1MM user files dir.

From the special calls editor choose File/Import and import the full list of callsigns.



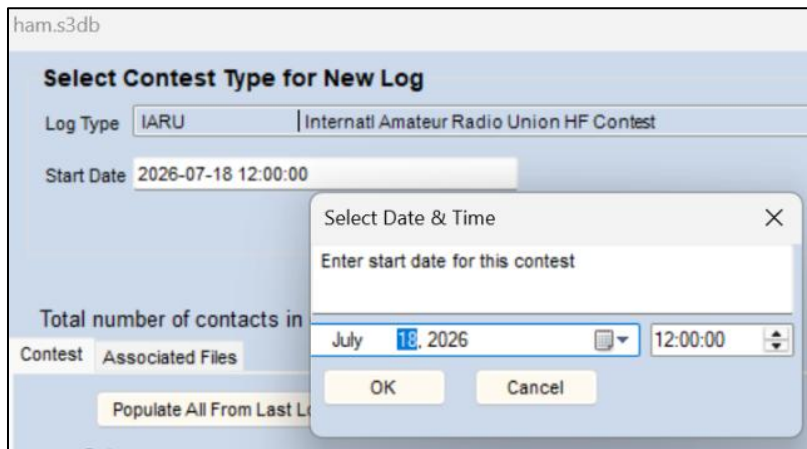
Only ONE person needs to create the list of calls, if that person learned to share...

Should you want to just focus on working those callsigns, you can create a call history file with them and choose the Telnet option "Show only spots in call history" in the filters tab. If you do that the only spots you will see in the bandmap and AMQ will be the competitors.

- Even if you don't use a PC microphone with N1MM the info about using one in the Observations by the Editor section above is interesting. It talks about a required start up sequence for N1MM when using some radio models.
- What pitfalls might you run into if you use N1MM to work a contest on your laptop and later import it into your desktop database? Z31PM had two. First, he didn't recognize there is only one IARU contest and that name wasn't what he was expecting. Not a big issue. The second would likely be unexpected by many N1MM users, including your Editor. He imported his IARU ADI file to his desktop N1MM program after the weekend – which is after the IARU contest was over. When he created a blank IARU file on his desktop it insisted the contest would start the upcoming weekend, July 18th. Rich VE3KI gave the following answer.

The program does not know the start date of the contest. When you create a new contest log, if the day you create the contest on is not a Saturday or Sunday, it chooses the next Saturday. It has no way to know that you are creating the log after the contest is over, so it assumes the contest is either still on, or that it will take place in the future, i.e. next weekend. You can change the start date to the correct date by clicking on the start date. This will open an editing box (see

below) where you can change the start date and time. You can click on the down arrow at the right-hand end of the date box in that new window and a small calendar will open where you can select the correct date, or you can edit the date by typing it in.



I routinely use a different database to set up my contests, called "Sandbox", to play around with upcoming contests and ensure I have all N1MM's settings correct. Then I use the File>Copy Contest to Another Database feature and move it to my "Contesting" database. Sometimes I do that the week before the actual contest. When doing that I have noticed what Z31PM did, the contest start date was the week before the actual contest. Whatever the start date was though has never caused me problems since the log checkers use the date/time of the contact and don't care what N1MM thinks the start date of the contest is.

Upcoming Contests:

See the WA7BNM webpages <https://www.contestcalendar.com/contestcal.html>

SFOTA Current Leaderboard:

Jul-16-2026						
Current Leaderboard						
DATA ENTRY WILL BE CLOSED BETWEEN JULY 19-27 SAVE SCORES TO ENTER AFTER THE 27TH						
2026 OVERALL STANDINGS						
CALL	Contests	CW QSO'S	SSB QSO'S	DIGITAL QSO'S	RTTY QSO'S	TOTAL QSO'S
1) WB4HRL	205	11162	236	206	445	12049
2) KE4EA	104	7190	1157	2	0	8349
3) WN4AFP	24	5003	2758	7	0	7768
4) K3DNE	13	561	4830	431	0	5822
5) K1ZZI	44	4746	472	0	0	5218
6) WB3X	43	3441	1650	0	0	5091
7) K4QQG	39	25	3467	465	138	4095
8) K4FT	62	3738	26	0	274	4038
9) NV4T	46	19	2186	217	263	2685
10) KZ3P	38	979	1345	29	186	2539
11) K4AMA	52	1550	652	9	19	2230
12) KD4S	31	1415	114	61	575	2165
13) WR4W	28	1181	339	0	485	2005
14) KG4IGC	10	333	131	0	1320	1784
15) K2SX	7	1610	0	0	0	1610
16) KA2G	9	0	956	641	0	1597
17) K7OM	13	730	0	0	824	1554
18) W4ANT	29	556	831	1	150	1538
19) N4XL	8	582	899	0	0	1481
20) N4QI	32	803	288	0	0	1091
21) KS4YX	3	228	0	0	800	1028
22) WA4LDU	32	58	529	157	98	842
23) NJ4F	2	0	0	0	465	465
24) NI7R	3	299	6	0	0	305
25) W1RPG	4	0	244	0	0	244
26) N2OG	2	0	165	0	0	165
27) WA2BCK	1	25	0	0	0	25
28) KS4VJ	3	0	0	20	0	20

3830 Activity:

Contest	Call	Class	Pwr	Score
All Asian CW				
6/23/26	W4ANT	SOAB	HP	4
ARRL FD				
6/28/26	AA4SD	1E	QRP	250
6/28/26	K4AMA	1D	LP	1,014

6/28/26	K4QQG	1D	LP	1,218
6/29/26	W4ANT	1E	LP	160
6/29/26	WB4HRL	1D	LP	124
ARRL June VHF				
6/18/26	AA5JF	Single Op-All Modes	HP	18,530
6/16/26	W4IX	Single Op-All Modes	LP	12,870
6/17/26	WA4LDU	Single Op-All Modes	LP	14,418
CQWW VHF CW/SSB				
7/5/26	K1ZZI	SOSB/6	LP	1,320
7/5/26	K3DNE	SOAB	HP	25,289
7/5/26	KA2G	SOSB/6	LP	360
7/5/26	KD4S	SOSB/6	HP	754
7/5/26	N2ZZ	SOAB	HP	100
7/5/26	W4ANT	SOSB/6	LP	2
7/9/26	WA4LDU	SOAB	LP	399
RAC Day				
7/2/26	K1ZZI	Single Op	HP	38,052
7/1/26	K4AMA	Single Op CW	LP	2,500
7/2/26	K4QQG	Single Op Assisted	HP	1,280
7/1/26	NV4T	Single Op	HP	19,836
7/2/26	WB3X	Single Op Assisted	LP	39,996
TBDC Summer				
6/21/26	N4IQ	Single Op	HP	232
WVQP				
6/21/26	K1ZZI	Single Op	HP	72
6/21/26	K4AMA	Single Op	LP	340
6/23/26	K4FT	Single Op	LP	32
6/21/26	K4QQG	Single Op	HP	12
6/21/26	KD4S	Single Op	HP	564
6/22/26	KE4EA	Single Op	LP	362
6/21/26	KZ3P	Single Op	LP	1,212
6/21/26	N2ZZ	Single Op	HP	1,365
6/21/26	N4QI	Single Op	LP	40
6/23/26	N4XL	Single Op	LP	108
6/21/26	NV4T	Single Op	LP	4,107
6/21/26	W4ANT	Single Op	HP	400

6/23/26	WA4LDU	Single Op	LP	156
6/24/26	WB3X	Single Op	LP	460
6/29/26	WN4AFP	Single Op	LP	648

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73 es QRT de N4XL